



## Climate change and mental health: An exploratory case study from Rigolet, Nunatsiavut, Canada

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### Abstract:

As the impacts from anthropogenic climate change are increasing globally, people are experiencing dramatic shifts in weather, temperature, wildlife and vegetation patterns, and water and food quality and availability. These changes impact human health and well-being, and resultantly, climate change has been identified as the biggest global health threat of the 21st Century. Recently, research is beginning to indicate that changes in climate, and the subsequent disruption to the social, economic, and environmental determinants of health, may cause increased incidences and prevalence of mental health issues, emotional responses, and large-scale sociopsychological changes. Through a multi-year, community-led, exploratory case study conducted in Rigolet, Nunatsiavut, Labrador, Canada, this research qualitatively explores the impacts of climate change on mental health and well-being in an Inuit context. Drawing from 67 in-depth interviews conducted between January 2010 and October 2010 with community members and local and regional health professionals, participants reported that changes in weather, snow and ice stability and extent, and wildlife and vegetation patterns attributed to climate change were negatively impacting mental health and well-being due to disruptions in land-based activities and a loss of place-based solace and cultural identity. Participants reported that changes in climate and environment increased family stress, enhanced the possibility of increased drug and alcohol usage, amplified previous traumas and mental health stressors, and were implicated in increased potential for suicide ideation. While a preliminary case study, these exploratory findings indicate that climate change is becoming an additional mental health stressor for resource-dependent communities and provide a baseline for further research.

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### Resource Description

#### Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Unspecified Exposure

#### Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Other Geographical Feature

# Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

**Other Geographical Feature :** sub-arctic

**Geographic Location:** 

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

**Non-United States:** Non-U.S. North America


**Health Impact:** 

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Mental Health/Stress

**Mental Health Effect/Stress:** Mood Disorder

**Population of Concern:** A focus of content

**Population of Concern:** 

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Racial/Ethnic Subgroup

**Other Racial/Ethnic Subgroup:** Canadian Inuit

**Resource Type:** 

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

**Timescale:** 

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified